



Lifting Life's Possibilities

Outlook

ALABAMA * DMHMR

July/August 2007

FROM THE COMMISSIONER



Summer is a time that we traditionally identify with vacations, the heat and various outdoor events in our communities. As you know, we have experienced drought conditions this year that have seriously affected farmers and other industries that depend on rain. At the same time, other parts of the country have had an abundance of rainfall...some even to the point of flooding. Nature is that way and to some extent, so is state government (except in state government there is rarely a "flood" of money...in good times just enough to help things grow.)

The department has recently reached a milestone in what I have called the "365 day conversation." We have received our FY 08 budget allocation and, although we were not "flooded" with resources, we did do fairly well and expect to move beyond recent year trends of "level services" to actually "expanding services." Fortunately, we have a planning and advisory process in place with various committees that involve a wide variety of stakeholders, providers and consumer/family members. More news about new or enhanced services will be forthcoming, but I wanted you to know that, as it currently stands, the budget is in good shape.

An important catalyst to progress is the formulation of a long range systems transformation plan. We will be assembling groups shortly that will have a wide variety of participants including local officials, 310 board and mental health center professionals, and, most importantly, consumers and family members. These meetings will greatly impact our long range plan. As the possibility of resources increases, it is the right time to crystalize our vision of a modernized mental health system. The more participants in the planning process, the better.

John M. Houston

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Department of Veterans Affairs Makes Efforts to Strengthen Its Mental Health Services

To strengthen one of the nation's largest mental health programs and continue providing world-class health care to the nation's veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced plans to hire suicide prevention counselors at each of its 153 medical centers.

"Many veterans have paid a high price for their service to our nation and have earned world-class mental health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. The new suicide prevention counselors will join the 9,000 mental health professionals already employed by VA. The department spends nearly \$3 billion a year for mental health services. About 1 million VA patients have a mental health diagnosis.

Nicholson previously announced a four-day meeting in July of mental health clinicians and researchers from across the country. This special forum will review all of the Department's programs to care for the mental health needs of veterans, especially those returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Preventing suicides requires timely access to high quality mental health services, along with programs specifically devoted to suicide prevention," said Dr. Michael J. Kussman, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "Treatment works, both to save lives and to make lives better."

Mental health services are provided at each of VA's 153 medical centers and more than 700 community-based outpatient clinics. Last month, Nicholson announced an initiative to hire 100 new employees to provide readjustment counseling at each of the Department's 207 community-based Vets Centers.

NAMI Releases New Resource for Families

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has released "A Family Guide to Mental Health: What You Need to Know," oriented especially towards African-American families affected by medical illnesses such as major depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

The 15-page booklet outlines symptoms and treatment options for each illness, along with NAMI education and support programs, and other information resources. It is intended for use by churches, community-based organizations, health and mental health centers, and schools.

Contact NAMI at 1-800-950-6264 to request single copies of the booklet or to order multiple copies at a bulk rate. The booklets can also be downloaded by visiting their Web site at <http://www.nami.org>.

New SAMHSA Report Provides State-Level Data on Depression

Approximately nine percent of youths aged 12 to 17, and 7.6 percent of adults aged 18 or older, experienced at least one major depressive episode (MDE) in the past year according to data recently released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The new analysis from SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) shows that among those 12-17 years of age, rates of past year MDE were among the highest in Idaho (10.4 percent) and Nevada (10.3 percent). The rates were among the lowest in Louisiana (7.2 percent) and South Dakota (7.4 percent).

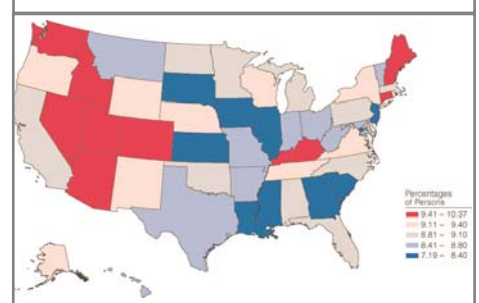
According to the survey, rates of past year MDE among adults aged 18 or older were among the highest in Utah (10.1 percent) and Rhode Island (9.9 percent). Hawaii and New Jersey had rates among the lowest (6.7 percent and 6.8 percent respectively).

In Alabama, the percentage of Past Year Major Depressive Episode among youths ages 12 to 17 was 8.88 percent. The percentage among adults aged 18 or older in Alabama was 7.65 percent.

MDE is defined as a period of two weeks or longer during which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image.

State Estimates of Depression: 2004 and 2005 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) is available on the Web at <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/states/depression.cfm>.

Percentages of Past Year Major Depressive Episode among Youths Aged 12 to 17, by State: 2004 and 2005



7th Annual Charley Pell Golf Tournament

The 7th Annual Charley Pell Golf Tournament will be held Friday, Sept. 21, at the Ol' Colony Golf Course in Tuscaloosa. The event is sponsored by the Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation Association.

Charley Pell is best known for his successes as a football player and collegiate coach. He was a member of the University of Alabama's 1961 Championship team, and during his coaching legacy built three national championship teams at Jacksonville State University, Clemson University and the University of Florida.

In his latter years, Coach Pell was a great advocate for people who shared his battle with mental illness. He was a passionate speaker and served on the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation's Board of Trustees.

The tournament will feature a 4-man scramble, BBQ cookout and outstanding prizes. If you would like more information about participating in the golf tournament, please contact Gold Professional John Gray at the Ol' Colony Golf Complex at 205-562-3201.

All proceeds will be used to further Charley Pell's message of hope for people with mental disabilities.



The upcoming Charley Pell Golf Tournament will take place September 21, in Tuscaloosa.

Deaf Services Employees Honored

Four employees in the Office of Deaf Services have recently received awards from statewide organizations. Shannon Reese, regional coordinator for Region II, received the *President's Award* from the Alabama Association of the Deaf. The honor is awarded to someone who in the opinion of the President of AAD, has performed exceptionally meritorious service to the Deaf Community.

Dawn Marren, who works as a regional interpreter for the Office of Deaf Services, won the *RESPECT Award*, given each year at the Annual Alabama Recovery Conference to individuals who are consistently respectful and supportive to individuals with a mental illness. Dawn is the first person ever nominated by a deaf consumer, and the first person to win the *RESPECT Award* for work with deaf consumers.

Wendy Lozynsky, regional coordinator in the Office of Deaf Services, received the *Professional of the Year Award* from the Council of Organizations Serving Deaf Alabamians. This award is given to someone in a professional position serving deaf and hard of hearing people, who has shown outstanding commitment to their field and to the people they serve. This award is only given in years where someone has been deemed worthy of it.

Finally, Charlene Crump, mental health interpreter coordinator in the Office of Deaf Services, was given the Alabama Association of the Deaf's *2007 Deaf Citizen of the Year Award*. This award is given to, "an organization, employer or citizen in Alabama who contributes to the benefit of the deaf and hard of hearing people."

Congratulations to all the award winners. Obviously, their work is making a difference in the lives of Alabamians who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Alabama to Double Spending for Substance Abuse Treatment Over the Next Year

Alabama is improving in the amount of state funding being made available for substance abuse prevention and treatment services. "The Alabama Legislature, Governor's office, other affected state departments, local officials, consumers and advocates are recognizing the devastating impact substance abuse and addiction are having in all areas. With this increased awareness, funding is beginning to follow," said Kent Hunt, associate commissioner for substance abuse at the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

In the fiscal year beginning October 1, the state has budgeted an additional \$6.1 million for the addiction services treatment division, bringing its total support to \$15.9 million. That money coupled with an annual \$23 million federal grant means that spending for drug and alcohol treatment in Alabama will hit an all-time high of \$38.9 million. With that money the state purchases substance abuse prevention and treatment services from certified community organizations, approximately fifty around the state. It also certifies all substance-abuse prevention and treatment programs, currently more than one hundred.
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Alabama to Double Spending for Substance Abuse Treatment Over the Next Year

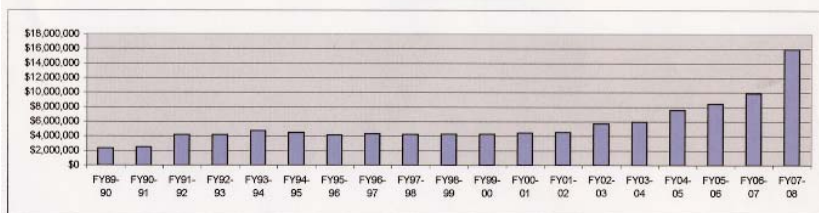
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SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES DIVISION

STATE FUNDING HISTORY

| Fiscal Year | State Expenditures |
|-------------|--------------------|
| FY89-90 | \$2,307,679 |
| FY90-91 | \$2,494,367 |
| FY91-92 | \$4,192,504 |
| FY92-93 | \$4,168,403 |
| FY93-94 | \$4,729,162 |
| FY94-95 | \$4,493,769 |
| FY95-96 | \$4,119,983 |
| FY96-97 | \$4,329,750 |
| FY97-98 | \$4,225,526 |
| FY98-99 | \$4,283,731 |
| FY99-00 | \$4,272,891 |
| FY00-01 | \$4,424,303 |
| FY01-02 | \$4,519,058 |
| FY02-03 | \$5,711,017 |
| FY03-04 | \$5,956,053 |
| FY04-05 | \$7,581,387 |
| FY05-06 | \$8,409,680 |
| FY06-07 | \$9,839,374 |
| FY07-08 | \$15,938,005 |

Budgeted
Budgeted



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Employee Honored

Mickey Groggel received the *Professional Employee of the Year Award* at the 51st Annual Arc Convention in Huntsville on June 28. Mickey works as a quality enhancement specialist in the Region III Community Services Office.

She was nominated by the Mobile Arc for her collaborative work with their agency to promote Social Role Valorization as a values based training and Person-Centered Planning as a support planning model for individuals served at the Mobile Arc.

According to Tom Holmes, director of the Arc of Alabama, this is the first time he can recall this honor being awarded to an Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation employee. Congratulations to Mickey.

Council on Developmental Disabilities Sponsors the 2007 National Respite Conference

The Council on Developmental Disabilities is serving as sponsor of the 2007 National Respite Conference, which will be held in October in Huntsville. The council funded the founding and strategic development of the Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network a few years ago, and was asked to sponsor this year's conference. Joining as sponsors are United Cerebral Palsy of Huntsville and Tennessee Valley, Inc., and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

The conference will provide valuable, up-to-date information on respite services and legislation that affects families, professionals and respite providers. Conference presenters will focus their expertise on implementation of the Lifespan Respite Care Act of 2006 (LRCA), passed by Congress in December 2006. More than 250 participants from over 35 states will address respite care issues of caregivers from across the lifespan who care for loved ones with disabilities and chronic illness.

State respite coalitions, social workers, nurses, physicians, foster care parents, state agencies, faith and community based organizations, national and state disability advocates, foundations, researchers and legislators are encouraged to attend the conference, which will be held October 3-5, at the Embassy Suites Hotel Von Braun Center. Registration cost is \$150 and includes two luncheons and an evening reception at U.S. Space and Rocket Center. For more information or to register, contact Linda Lamberth with the Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network at alabamarespite@aol.com.

"Personal Choices" Plan to Benefit Medicaid Users

Governor Bob Riley announced on May 24, that Alabama is the first state to make consumer-directed care for Medicaid home and community-based services a permanent part of its State Plan. This change will enable nearly 700 older adults and people with disabilities to have greater flexibility and control over the delivery of their personal health care services, Governor Riley said.

Unlike waiver programs, which must be renewed periodically, State Plan-approved services become a regular part of the Medicaid program and qualify for federal matching dollars. "This important change makes consumer-directed care a reality for these individuals. It gives them more choices, more control and more options when it comes to their health care. Alabamians can be proud our state is leading the nation when it comes to providing greater consumer choice," said Governor Riley.

The Governor was recently notified that the state's "Personal Choices" program was approved as an option for certain individuals in seven West Alabama counties. Those who are part of the Elderly and Disabled waiver and the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) waiver home and community-based waiver programs are eligible to take part. Beginning August 1, Personal Choices will be administered by the Alabama Department of Senior Services in Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties. If successful, the agencies hope to expand it to qualifying recipients in other areas of the state. The program is a collaborative effort of the Alabama Medicaid Agency, the Alabama Department of Senior Services and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

Alabama becomes the first state to take advantage of a provision in the federal Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 allowing states to make program changes to help Medicaid recipients live independently in the community.

Under the Personal Choices program, individuals will be provided a monthly allowance from which they will determine what services they need. Financial counselors will be available to guide them through the process which includes developing a budget to help manage the funds designated for their care. The new program is voluntary and will not cost more than the current system. Instead it allows eligible Medicaid recipients to be responsible for funds that would have otherwise been spent on their behalf.

Mental Health America Presents Highest Honor to Alabama Mental Health Advocate

Mental Health America awarded Lucindia Claghorn of Mobile with its highest honor, the Clifford W. Beers Award, for her leadership and community service, at the closing night dinner of its Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. on June 9. Each year, Mental Health America presents the Beers Award to a mental health consumer who best reflects the example set by Mental Health America founder Clifford W. Beers in his efforts to improve conditions for and attitudes toward people living with mental illnesses.

"Lucindia Claghorn inspires countless individuals living with mental illnesses and other advocates through her tireless service to others," said David Shern, Ph.D., president and CEO, Mental Health America. "Claghorn's remarkable life illuminates the powerful possibilities that reside in each person, regardless of disability or stigma."

Along with a close-knit, supportive network of friends and health care providers, Claghorn has worked to establish a life of advocacy, openness and empowerment for individuals with mental illnesses. Claghorn's many accomplishments include winning the Eli Lilly Foundation's Annual Reintegration Mentoring Award for her 30 years of volunteer advocacy and work for the mental health movement. She is the founding member and first president of the Mental Health Services Council Consumer Council, a Mental Health America of Southern Alabama spokesperson, a skilled linguist and, most recently, a published author.

Created in 1976, the Beers award is presented annually to a consumer of mental health or substance abuse services.



Lucindia Claghorn speaks at the 2006 National Recovery Conference.

Coming Full Circle: David Battle's Story

As a talented high school football player entertaining close to 50 scholarship offers from colleges throughout the nation, David Battle was excited about his future. After visiting several colleges, he decided that Auburn University was the place for him to continue his football career. But he didn't know events that would occur over the next several years would not only keep him from ever playing football for the university, but would also send him spiraling down a path of drug abuse and ultimately to jail.

David drank all through high school, even becoming known as the "beer guy" that others could go to to get beer. That followed him into college, and after arriving at Auburn, he got in a street fight and sustained injuries to the point that he could not play football and was redshirted his freshman year. While working to come back and play the next year, he injured his knee so badly that it required reconstructive surgery, and David was released on a medical hardship scholarship.

David tried to return to Auburn to go to school, but found himself in a hole when some friends charged up a huge telephone bill in his name. Finding it hard to get the money, he started selling drugs with his brother. Unfortunately, he also started using drugs at this time. He says, "From the first time I used, the first hit, I was gone." Soon David was using the drugs he was trying to sell so much that he wasn't making any profit, so he started stealing cigarettes and money from businesses.

Consequently, David spent many of his next years in and out of jail on robbery and drug charges. He enrolled in a drug treatment program in one of the prisons, but



Consumer David Battle will be a speaker at the National Recovery Conference in September.

relapsed soon after he was released. After several other stints in and out of prison, David was again arrested, but this time was put in a "drunk tank" for an extended period of time. He says, "That was a blessing for me. All I had was my AA book and Bible." He soon became a part of another drug treatment program, and this time, it worked. As he was in recovery, he began working as an intern at Limestone Correctional Facility with HIV unit counselor "Momma Ward," who served as his mentor.

After being released from prison, David started to get serious about his life and earned degrees in general education and sociology from Calhoun Community College and Athens State University. He then heard about Operation Follow Through, which allowed former athletes to finish up their education at Auburn University. David enrolled in the program, and graduated in 2004 with a bachelor's in psychology. While going to school, David worked as a prevention specialist at a local mental health center, and knew that's where his passion was. He is now in school at Alabama A&M University, where he is working on a master's in psychology. He also works as a counselor in the HIV unit at Limestone, taking "Momma Ward's" place at the very facility where he served time.

David has come full circle, and believes he is, "blessed to be able to give back and to be an example, giving other prisoners the hope they need as they look at someone who used to be in their situation who has made it out." David enjoys spending time with his three sons, and says that they are, "my lifeline, and I'm so blessed to be able to be in their lives."

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If you have anything you would like to submit for this newsletter, please contact Kristi Gates at (334) 242-3417 or kristi.gates@mh.alabama.gov.